***Fun Facts about Sheep***

Sheep are found all over the world. Most of them are domesticated, but some of them live in the wild. They are very social animals and live in groups called flocks.

Domesticated sheep may live on small farms or on large ranges. They like to graze and eat grass, but farmers may also give them hay and grain to eat. It is very important that they have lots of water to drink and shelter in very hot or very cold weather.

***Parts, Parts, Parts***

For starters,you may be interested to know that sheep are born with long tails.

For purpose of cleanliness, the tails are surgically shortened (docked) shortly after birth. In some parts of the world, tails are left undocked.

The short tails are less likely to become soiled with manure and are therefore, less likely to promote local infections and fly strike.



Sheep have 2 digits on each foot. The hooves grow like fingernails and need to be trimmed every few months to maintain normal conformation.

Sheep are ruminants. This means that they have four parts to their upper digestive tract (people only have one: the stomach) and they chew their cud. This means that they chew and swallow their food and then bring it back up into their months to chew and swallow again. Yuck!

Chewing cud is important, however, because it allows them to digest grass and hay. Do you know what other kinds of animals are ruminants?

Answer: Cows, goats, deer, buffalo and even reindeer.

Sheep are often set up on their rumps for restraint during procedures such as foot trimming and shearing.

***Wooly Wooly***

There are many different breeds of sheep. They are classified by what kind of wool they produce. *Merino* and *Rambouillet*have fine wool.

Some sheep have coarse or long wool like*Cotswold*, *Romney*, and the *Barbado*.

But most breeds of sheep fall under the category of medium wool. Examples of sheep in this category include *Columbia*,*Suffolk*, *Hampshire*, *Dorset*, *Southdown*, *Cheviot* and *Finn*.



When sheep receive a haircut, it is called shearing.

The wool that is cut off is washed to get dirt, insects, and straw that may have stuck to the sheep's fur out. The cleaned wool is then dyed to color it. The wool is combed and spun into yarn.

The wool from sheep is often used to make sweaters, hats, socks, scarves and other types of clothing. Sheep's wool may also be stuffed inside quilts and comforters.

Sheep are a very valuable source of food. Did you know that sheep can be milked just like cows? Sheep's milk is often used to make gourmet cheeses. Mutton, or the meat of sheep, is another food product for which the animals may be raised.

One thing that you may not know is that the fat from sheep also known as tallow, can be used to make both candles and soap. The tallow is cooked to purify it, and then molded into candles or further prepared into blocks of soap.



Female sheep are called ewes, male sheep are called rams, and baby sheep are called lambs.

Lambs typically weigh about nine pounds when they are born. Did you know that sheep can have twins or even triplets?



A lamb drinks its mother's milk for about 4 months and then it eats grass, hay and grain.

A sheep usually lives to be about eight years old but can sometimes live to be as old as twenty.



Finally, sheep make wonderful pets to many people all over the world. While they may require different care and housing than dogs and cats, they still need love and attention.